

WORKINGTON
URBAN SANITARY AUTHORITY.



ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE
MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH,
FOR THE YEAR 1903,

BY
JOHN HIGGET,
Medical Officer of Health.

Workington :

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*To the Chairman and Members of the Workington Urban
Sanitary Authority.*

ANNUAL REPORT

Of Medical Officer of Health for the year 1903.

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,

The statistics, which in the first place I submit to you, are based as formerly on an estimated population of 26,000.

BIRTH-RATE.—During the year 950 births were registered in your district of which 471 were males and 479 females, being equal to an annual birth-rate of 36·6 per 1,000 as compared with 36·3 for the preceding year.

DEATH-RATE.—The deaths registered amounted to 463 of which 259 were male and 204 females ; this is equal to an annual death-rate of 17·8 per 1,000 as compared with 16·5 for preceding year.

I append the death-rate since 1882 :—

In 1882	...	24·4 per 1000.
„ 1883	...	18·2 „
„ 1884	...	16·2 „
„ 1885	...	18·7 „
„ 1886	...	17·7 „
„ 1887	...	18·9 „
„ 1888	...	21 „
„ 1889	...	18 „
„ 1890	...	18·3 „
„ 1891	...	16·6 „
„ 1892	...	19 „
„ 1893	...	16 „
„ 1894	...	14·95 „
„ 1895	...	19·5 „
„ 1896	...	15·8 „
„ 1897	...	14·46 „
„ 1898	...	20·3 „
„ 1899	...	17·6 „
„ 1900	...	19·6 „
„ 1901	...	15·5 „
„ 1902	...	16·5 „

The following is a classification of the ages at which the deaths occurred :—

157	under 1 year
70	over 1 year and under 5 years
22	„ 5 „ „ 15 „
19	„ 15 „ „ 25 „
116	„ 25 „ „ 60 „
79	„ 60
—	
463	

INFANT MORTALITY was at the rate of 165·2 per 1,000, as compared with 130 for the preceding year, and included 5 deaths from inanition, 5 from tuberculous peritonitis, 2 from phthisis pulmonalis, 1 from cardiac malformation, 1 from croup, 38 from bronchitis, 9 from general debility, 22 from gastritis, 20 from convulsions, 7 from gastro-enteritis, 2 from general tuberculosis, 3 from gastro-intestinal catarrh, 1 from pneumonia, 14 from premature birth, 8 from asthenia, 1 from infantile atrophy and 1 from meningitis.

I have repeatedly drawn your attention to the high rate of infant mortality which, unfortunately, prevails in your district, and acting under your instructions have had leaflets distributed bearing on the question of infant feeding. Up to the present time these do not appear to have had much salutary effect.

THE ZYMOTIC DEATH-RATE was equal to 1·5 per 1000, as compared with ·76 for preceeding year, and included 19 deaths from measles, 10 from whooping cough, 7 from diarrhea, 1 from membranous croup, and 3 from diphtheria.

The increase in the rate, as will be seen, has been mainly due to measles and whooping cough.

Under the Infectious Diseases (Notification) Act I have received :—

Scarlet Fever	...	19
Enteric Fever	...	13
Diphtheria	...	13
Membranous Croup	...	2
Small Pox	...	15
Erysipelas	...	26
Chicken Pox	...	57

135

SMALL POX.—We had, as will be seen, during the later months of the year, what at one time looked like being rather a severe epidemic of small-pox. For the early cases we had recourse as formerly to the Port Sanitary's Hospital on the Merchant's Quay, but this was soon found to be all too small, and we were obliged to discharge the fever patients from, and to use Ellerbeck Hospital for the reception of those who were unfortunate enough to contract the disease. That we have been able to limit the epidemic and to stamp it out in a reasonable time, is in a great measure due to the splendid facilities for isolation both for the treatment of disease and for quarantine purposes possessed by your hospital. Without it the efforts of your sanitary staff would have been very materially handicapped, whilst the expense attendant on the rushing up of improvised buildings would have been considerable, a maximum of cost and a minimum of comfort. I have in my monthly reports alluded to the measures relied on to combat the spread of this particular disease, and need now only say that if experience and satisfactory practical results are to continue to guide us (as I submit they should) there was no shadow of doubt that in the vaccination and re-vaccination of all 'contacts' and those engaged in handling the disease lay the chief means of safety. It is to be regretted that your district (as I have previously pointed out) is so badly protected, and that there is such a large percentage of unvaccinated children in your midst. In the epidemic which we have just had, the type of disease in two of the cases at least was confluent and very severe. One shudders to think what the consequences might be to infant life did this same type at any time begin its operations on what would practically be virgin soil, and at a period when the death rate amongst the unvaccinated is so very high. That the situation is a serious one and may at any time become dangerous, goes without saying, and upon this point it would be both interesting and instructive to have the opinion of the Medical Inspector of the Local Government Board, who lately visited your district in connection with the small-pox outbreak, more particularly with regard to the part played by vaccination

and the way in which the Act was administered. As an individual and as your Medical Officer of Health, I can do little more than call attention to what I cannot but regard as a matter of great and serious gravity. The remedy lies not with me (or it would soon be applied), but with those to whom I trust and hope there may never come the bitter experience of a practical conversion, perhaps all the more bitter because its effects have been too long delayed.

In company with your Inspector, I have from time to time made systematic inspections of your district, and instructed him on matters effecting its sanitary welfare.

WATER SUPPLY. — No doubt the unsatisfactory nature of the water supply which prevails more or less at the present time over the greater part of your district, is due to the corroded condition of the service pipes. I understand your authority are giving this matter your serious consideration, and that having such a splendid water supply at your service, the inauguration of which has been one of the features of the year, you are determined not to rest content till you afford the whole of your district a plentiful supply of good pure Crummock water. It is peculiarly gratifying to me that this great work should now be so rapidly approaching consummation, for a reference to my reports for the last ten years will show how constantly I kept impressing upon you the grave dangers to public health that an intermittent water supply may entail. Too often is the experience of a medical officer of health a record of much attempted and but little or nothing done. I feel, however, that by your kind assistance and co-operation, I can congratulate myself on seeing your district the proud possessor of a really magnificent water supply, and of an infectious hospital the most complete in the district, the acquisition of which, in spite of the unfavourable criticisms to which it has been subjected, has been such a source of comfort to us during the past year, and the means of saving us from an expenditure the amount of which no one can fairly estimate.

HOUSING QUESTION.—And if we have not been so successful in dealing with the Housing Question there still remains a record of some good work done in this direction. During the year some 18 houses have been scheduled as unfit for human habitation, and these have either been put into proper sanitary repair or closed. The King-street scheme is within reasonable distance of accomplishment, though I confess I should have prepared to have seen it tackled ‘en bloc’ and not as we are doing on the piecemeal system. There yet remains Griffin-street and The Brows, the subject of a past representation by me but progress with which has been interrupted mainly by the fact that there were already rather too many irons in the fire. I am hopeful, however, that this great and very necessary scheme will yet receive due attention at your hands, and that this district which will be in close proximity to the new public park on the Cloffocks, will be made to harmonise with the general picturesqueness of surroundings the plans for which, if carried out, will add so much to that artistic effect for which we have so long and so vainly striven, and which will make the town of Workington “a thing of beauty and a joy for ever.”

During the year 18 workmen’s dwelling have been erected in Blackburn-street under Part III of the Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1890. As I have already explained in previous reports this is not quite the direction in which I should like to see your efforts concentrated for the better housing of the working classes, though I am deeply sensible of the interest and honesty of purpose which has led to your action in this matter; but what I should like to see is some effort made to improve the dwellings and the surroundings of those who are a step lower down in the social scale, whose weekly earnings hardly average one pound, and who cannot therefore be expected to pay such a rent as a residence in Blackburn-street entails. The carrying out of such a scheme has been made easier by the new Act which has just come into operation, and I trust that at no very distant date this really necessary work will be taken in hand.

The sewerage of your North Side district is a matter which must soon engage the attention of your authority, and will doubtless add to the sanitary welfare of its inhabitants. I have in my reports referred to the probable dangers likely to arise from the 'dumping' of ashes and refuse over certain parts of your district now that you are deprived of the hoppers, and I have advised the erection of a suitable destructor. This matter indeed had advanced so far as to form the subject of enquiry by a small committee, but their report up to the present time has not been forthcoming, and there is reason to fear that its further consideration has for the time being been abandoned.

Under the Factory and Workshops Act attention has been given to the sanitary condition of workshops and work places, particularly with regard to air space, drainage and ventilation, and on the whole at the present time, they may be said to be in quite a satisfactory condition.

Other matters connected with public health administration in your district have been dealt with by your Inspector, Mr. Sheldon, whose report I submit, and to whom I am again indebted for his most valued and much appreciated assistance during a year that has been more than unusually trying owing to the increased work thrown upon the department by the appearance of small-pox.

Yours respectfully,

JOHN HIGHET.

BOROUGH OF WORKINGTON.

SANITARY INSPECTOR'S ANNUAL REPORT.

Inspector's Office,
Field House,
January 9th, 1904.

To John Hight, Esq., M.D., M.O.H.

Sir,

I have the honour to submit my Fourteenth Annual Report, giving a summary of the work done in my department, as per Report Book, for the year ending December 31st, 1903.

INSPECTION OF THE BOROUGH AND REMOVAL OF
NUISANCES.

The lanes, courts and yards in the Borough, including Siddick, North Side, Old Side and Beerpot, have as in previous years been regularly and as far as possible, systematically inspected.

During the course of such inspections, a large proportion of nuisances were discovered for which the occupiers themselves were responsible, not arising from any structural defect, and in many cases notice was served either verbal or by letter; but in all cases where structural alterations were required, notice to carry out the necessary works were served upon the owners, and I am pleased to say that it has not been necessary to invoke the aid of the law for the abatement of any nuisance.

INSANITARY PROPERTY.

A special inspection during the year with your assistance was made of certain cottages and tenements in the vicinity of King-street, and upon a representation being made to the Council, it was adjudged that the property in question was no longer in a fit condition for human habitation, and also such of the houses, which at the time of inspection were unoccupied, were in such a state of disrepair as to justify demolition.

No legal proceedings were taken (beyond the service of notices) to procure the closure, but by other means the whole of the houses scheduled are now closed and the work of demolition being proceeded with.

The houses number thirteen, including one double tenement house.

The following table shows the number and nature of the nuisances dealt with during the year :—

Nature of Nuisances.			Number.
Choked and filthy water closets	...	...	110
Defective water-closets	...	...	60
Providing water supply to water closets	...	...	40
Unventilated soil pipes	...	...	3
Choked drains	...	...	50
Defective drains	...	...	10
Defective waste pipes	...	...	6
Offensive and defective gullies	...	...	20
Defective pavement in back yard	...	...	18
Accumulation of manure and other refuse	...	...	25
Dirty houses	...	...	20
Defective roofs over houses	...	...	16
Defective walls, ceilings and floors	...	...	5
Houses with inadequate ventilation	...	...	11
Defective spouts	...	...	19
Smoke nuisances	...	...	3
Overcrowding in houses	...	...	9
Cleanse and limewash dirty houses and premises	...	...	14
Miscellaneous nuisances	...	...	22
Total			361

REGISTERED COMMON LODGING HOUSES.

There are still six upon the register, and each house has been subject to regular and frequent inspection; the sanitary arrangements having regard to the locality in each case has been satisfactory. It has been necessary, however, owing to the outbreak of small-pox in September last, to make repeated inspections and to exercise the most careful supervision over the lodging houses, especially with regard to tramp lodgers, and in every case the measures taken were successful, and neither in Udale-street, Church-street or Derwent-street had we any extension of the disease. This is the more remarkable inasmuch as these different centres seemed to afford every facility for the further propagation of small-pox.

DAIRIES, COWSHEDS AND PURVEYORS OF MILK.

There are now the names of twenty-nine cowkeepers and milksellers upon the register, as compared with 31 for the preceeding year.

The premises of each have been periodically inspected, and instructions given in three instances to improve ventilation, otherwise they were found to be in fair condition generally.

BAKEHOUSES.

Of these there are three, exclusive of confectionery establishments, and I am glad to report that they are kept in a good sanitary condition, limewashing, &c., carried out as per statutory enactment, and in connection with the many confectionery shops in the Borough, except in three or four cases complained of by H.M. Inspector of Factories, none of these proving to be of a very serious character, and at once remedied by the occupiers, are also in good condition.

FACTORY AND WORKSHOPS' ACTS.

Premises coming under the regulation of the above Acts have had my attention. I have been unable to dis-

cover any serious contravention of the law, except in one or two cases where a verbal warning was sufficient to put matters right.

VANS, &C.

All vans used as dwellings occupying the Fairfield site and that of Frostom's, have been inspected with a view to ascertaining whether any infectious disease existed or had, within any reasonable period, taken place; also enquiries made as to the particular districts visited with a view to find out if possible, whether the vans or occupants had been in contact with any infectious disorder, and which in that case might be a source of danger to the inhabitants of the Borough.

I am pleased to say that nothing of an unusual character was discovered, and I was also agreeably surprised that many of the vans were exceptionally clean and in very good order.

BOROUGH SLAUGHTER HOUSES.

Almost daily visits have been paid to the public slaughter houses in Harrington-road, and I am glad to say that at the present time and for the greater part of the year it is, and has been, kept in a very satisfactory condition.

I am sorry to say that this could not be said in previous years, but the flagging of the yard in the early part of the year with granite sets, and the abolition of the open tubs more recently, and the substitution of an iron tip cart for the reception of filth, offal, &c., has effected a much desired and necessary reform; the usual limewashing has been carried out.

On the 7th February, a pig was found dead in one of the pig pens and was destroyed, the owner giving consent.

On the 28th March, a cow was brought into the Slaughterhouse by a local tradesman, and after the animal being slaughtered, and opened into, it was found to be badly affected with tuberculosis; the carcass was destroyed, with the consent of the owner.

The private slaughter house in Elizabeth Street (Mr. A. Fisher's) has also had attention, and although as in the case of the public abattoirs, in close proximity to dwelling houses, there has been no complaint and no irregularity discovered.

The annexed table shews the number of animals killed during the year 1903 :—

BOROUGH . SLAUGHTER HOUSES.

Beasts	Sheep	Lambs	Calves	Pigs	Total
2,226	7,218	2,067	148	1,597	13,256

PRIVATE SLAUGHTER HOUSE, ELIZABETH STREET.

Beasts	Sheep and Lambs	Calves	Total
100	730	20	850

The above return is, of course, exclusive of the weekly import of meat brought in from the country districts and generally deposited on Hag Hill and several other centres where foreign meat is sold.

MARKETS.

The markets have been regularly inspected for the purpose of detecting any article in the shape of food or fruit unwholesome or unsound. I have seen nothing exposed for sale to justify interference.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES (NOTIFICATION) ACT.

I think I need hardly say that the demand made upon my time for the effective dealing with the subjoined list

of infectious diseases has been very considerable, especially with regard to the more serious cases of small-pox. Every effort was made for the prompt removal of the patients and each house in turn disinfected; bedding, &c., passed through the disinfector, and as appearances go at present, we may, I trust, hope that the epidemic is at an end. With regard to other notifiable diseases the usual course of inspections have been made and disinfectants supplied.

Diseases.			Number.
Scarlet Fever	...	...	19
Enteric Fever	...	...	13
Diphtheria ...	...	...	13
Membraneous Croup	...	...	2
Erysipelas ...	...	...	26
Small Pox ...	...	...	13
Chicken Pox ...	...	...	56
			—
			142

I am, Sir, Yours, &c.,

WM. SHELDON,

Sanitary Inspector.

